



Departmental Administration

Strategic Plan 2001 - 2005

August 2000

Departmental Administration's (DA) mission is to support the Secretary and USDA's program agencies in meeting their responsibilities. We do this through centralized administrative programs, policies and services. Some of our mandates result directly from statutes; others are driven from implementing regulations promulgated by organizations such as the Office of Personnel Management, the General Services Administration or the Office of Management and Budget. Other mandates are directly attributable to the Secretary's management goals for USDA and the need for central coordination at the Department level.

DA's functions include the following: human resources management, civil rights, small and disadvantaged business utilization, procurement and property management, facilities operations, conflict resolution, crisis planning and management, energy efficiency, ethics, and outreach programs. DA is also home to judicial functions and the Hazardous Materials Management Group, organizations which have been administratively placed within DA.

Mission

Provide management leadership to ensure that USDA administrative programs, policies, advice and counsel meet the needs of USDA program organizations, consistent with laws and mandates; and provide safe and efficient facilities and services to customers.

The mission statement of DA reflects the pride and commitment of the people who comprise the organization. These include support staffs, top managers and employees who deliver services directly to our customers or who support the operations of USDA through development of policies and procedures.

Programs and Services

USDA is the third-largest civilian Department of the U.S. Government, overseeing a variety of agencies, Government corporations, and other entities that employ more than 95,000 people at over 15,000 locations in all 50 States and in 60 countries. DA, through its programs, policies and services, ensures that USDA's mission areas and programs receive the required administrative policies and services they need to function efficiently and effectively.

Organizationally, DA is composed of all offices that report directly to the Assistant Secretary for Administration. Appendix 1 is an organization chart and description of each organization. DA performs a leadership role for the Secretary in coordinating many activities throughout USDA. One of the major challenges in our strategic planning process is capturing our role as both a USDA policy maker and as a direct service provider for the many programs we manage. Some of the DA's major policy and service activities are listed below:

- We develop USDA-wide policies and procedures to procure goods and services and ensure that procurement practices are sound and efficient. USDA procures administrative

goods and services valued in excess of \$1 billion annually, excluding agricultural commodity purchases. We also develop and manage USDA-wide corporate procurement automation systems to assist agencies in acquiring goods and services quickly and cost effectively. For example, our Purchase Card Management System was used by 27,964 card holders in fiscal year 2000 to process over 1.3 million transactions with a total value in excess of \$500 million.

- We manage USDA properties, vehicles, aircraft and real estate, either directly or through programs run in the USDA agencies. We develop USDA-wide policies, procedures and systems to ensure that sound practices are in place for the management of our assets, and develop and deploy property systems to assist agencies in accomplishing their missions.
- We manage five (5) government-owned facilities and space in 18 leased locations in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area. These buildings are occupied by over 11,000 employees. We make sure buildings are safe and serve the needs of our employees and the many customers that visit USDA for their business requirements. We also help USDA agencies with accessible technologies and reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities or disabling conditions.
- We are USDA's central human resources management office. We work with agencies to develop programs to hire the staff we need to deliver USDA's many services across the nation. USDA employs over 365 distinct occupational groups, including scientists, fire-fighters, food inspectors, conservationists, office workers and many other important occupations. We assist the Secretary and the agencies in managing their human capital investments to ensure that USDA hires and retains the best skilled people - - people who reflect our nation's diversity.
- We assist USDA employees in understanding ethics regulations and in ensuring that USDA's business is conducted with impartiality and integrity.
- We support USDA with civil rights policies and procedures to ensure that employees and customers of our programs are treated fairly and get the services they need. We also process civil rights complaints and work directly with the USDA agencies to improve their civil rights programs.
- We coordinate USDA's efforts to get its programs out to everyone who needs them, especially socially or economically disadvantaged customers. We also manage the Small Farm Outreach, Training and Technical Assistance Program, better known as the "2501" Program. We are assisted in our outreach efforts by the USDA National Outreach Council which is composed of senior officials from each of the USDA agencies.
- We also reach out to small, disadvantaged and women-owned businesses to help them compete for opportunities with USDA.
- We help to resolve conflicts. Created in 1998, our USDA Conflict Resolution and Prevention Center, provides USDA employees with techniques to handle conflict better -- workplace conflict, conflict with farmers or ranchers, even conflict with other agencies.

- We are the Department's focal point for coordinating crisis planning and management activities. We work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and all other Federal Departments to respond to natural or man-made disasters. We ensure that an emergency structure is in place nationwide for USDA to respond swiftly and effectively.
- We coordinate many special initiatives such as government-wide “greening” initiatives which promote the use of environmentally preferable, bio-based, and recycled products. We also promote the use of alternative fuels for USDA fleets and energy efficiency in USDA facilities, including the use of renewable fuels. We also coordinate the Computers for Learning Program, which will place hundreds of thousands of computers in our Nation's classrooms and prepare our children to contribute and compete in the 21st century.

Goals and Objectives

In keeping with our mandates and responsibilities, we have identified three strategic goals and eight strategic objectives. These goals and objectives are broad and are supported by organizational plans as needed.

GOAL 1 **CIVIL RIGHTS- *Ensure that USDA provides fair and equitable service to all customers and upholds the civil rights of its employees.***

Objective 1.1 Promote a discrimination-free workplace and program delivery system that is consistent with civil rights policies and requirements.

Objective 1.2 Promote and coordinate USDA mission areas' outreach and technical assistance to under-served farmers, ranchers and other recipients of Departmental programs.

Objective 1.3 Promote increased participation of small businesses in USDA contract and program activities.

GOAL 2 **CORPORATE LEADERSHIP- *Provide the best solutions to USDA's corporate administrative issues to support the efficient and timely delivery of Departmental programs and services.***

Objective 2.1 Ensure that USDA will have a skilled, satisfied workforce and strong prospects for retention of its best employees.

Objective 2.2 Provide leadership and coordination to USDA mission areas to improve service delivery through implementation of corporate administrative practices and systems.

GOAL 3 **CUSTOMER SERVICE - *Ensure high quality services so that USDA missions have the space, facilities, mail and property services, personnel support and resources they need to deliver their programs in a timely and efficient manner.***

Objective 3.1 Anticipate and deliver timely and efficient services to USDA's national capital region customers.

Objective 3.2 Provide a safe and functional workplace for USDA employees in the HQ complex and George Washington Carver Center.

Objective 3.3 Improve Human Resources Customer Services.

Goal 1 Civil Rights

Ensure that USDA provides fair and equitable service to all customers and upholds the civil rights of its employees.

■ Objective 1.1 Promote a discrimination-free workplace and program delivery system that is consistent with civil rights policies and requirements.

- Conduct civil rights impact analyses of all USDA regulations to assess disparate impacts on socially disadvantaged customers.
 - Provide full and equal access to USDA programs in a discrimination-free environment.
 - Ensure timely and fair processing of program and equal employment civil rights complaints.
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Strategies to Achieve these Objectives - We will

- Review fairness and equity of USDA program delivery and its impact on socially disadvantaged customers.
 - Work with historically Black colleges and universities, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the Native American institutions, and other universities with substantial minority enrollment, to encourage their participation in USDA programs and activities and encourage minority students to pursue careers in the food and agricultural sciences.
 - Conduct civil rights evaluations to hold each mission area and senior USDA managers accountable.
 - Enhance outreach programs to socially disadvantaged customers.
 - Continually monitor civil rights activities to identify violations and ensure appropriate remedies.
 - Enforce Executive orders, Congressional mandates, and other laws, rules, and regulations related to civil rights.
 - Maintain effective systems to process both program and employment complaints of discrimination.
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Key Outcome Measures:

- Conduct civil rights impact analyses of all USDA regulations to assess disparate impacts on underserved customers.
 - Baseline: In 2000, civil rights impact analyses were conducted on all regulations.
Target: Maintain 100% civil rights impact analyses of all USDA regulations.
 - Provide full and equal access to USDA programs in a discrimination-free environment.
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- Baseline: In 2001, 20% of USDA programs underwent civil rights compliance reviews.
Target: Every major USDA program is reviewed no less than every five years.
 - Ensure timely resolution of program and equal employment civil rights complaints.
Baseline: In 1998, processing times were 243 days for program complaints and 348 days for employment complaints.
Target: By 2001, reduce processing time every year for both program and employment complaints to less than 180 days by FY 2005.
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Key External Factors:

The processing of complaints will be affected by the number of complaints received, their complexity and the passage of new laws and regulations. Early resolution of workplace and program disputes can be enhanced through the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) techniques.

- **Objective 1.2** Promote and coordinate USDA mission areas' outreach and technical assistance to under-served farmers, ranchers and other recipients of Departmental programs.
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Strategies to Achieve this Objective - We will

- Assist the under-served through the Small Farm Outreach, Training and Technical Assistance Program (2501).
 - Analyze trends related to participation of historically underserved populations in USDA programs.
 - Develop and provide training and education on outreach function models, best practices, policies, strategic plans and goals to USDA employees and stakeholders.
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Key Outcome Measures:

- Establish, in every agency, effective outreach programs that target underserved customers.
- Baseline: In 1999, each USDA agency created a plan to reach out to underserved customers.
Target: In 2001 and future years, each agency will have acted on their outreach plan and experienced an improvement in minority participation in USDA programs. The target will be maintained every year through FY 2005.
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Key External Factors:

The outcome of this objective depends on several factors over which DA has limited influence such as budget resources, and Departmental program objectives.

■ **Objective 1.3 Promote increased participation of small businesses in USDA contract and program activities.**

Strategies to Achieve this Objective - We will

- Brief all agency heads and coordinate with USDA agencies to achieve or exceed annual goals established for small businesses, 8(a) firms, small disadvantaged and small women-owned businesses and to increase USDA's acquisitions under the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program.
 - Develop a comprehensive set of technical assistance materials to assist small businesses to be more successful in competing for USDA contract and program opportunities.
 - Sponsor symposiums and technical assistance conferences.
 - Establish partnerships with USDA agencies, other federal agencies, and professional organizations to improve outreach to small businesses especially small businesses owned and operated by women, Hispanics and American Indians.
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Key Outcome Measures:

- Increase participation of small businesses.
- Baseline: In FY 1997, a baseline of 19 percent was established for USDA contracts set aside exclusively for small business participation.
Target: By 2003, increase percentage of contract opportunities set aside for small businesses by 50 percent over a base year of 1997.
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Key External Factors:

Federal budget levels will be a factor in achieving this objective as will changes in Federal acquisition regulations and statutes affecting small businesses. A key factor in assessing USDA's progress will be the level of accuracy of Agency procurement data input to USDA tracking systems.

Goal 2 Corporate Leadership

Provide the best solutions to USDA's corporate administrative issues to support the efficient and timely delivery of Departmental programs and services.

- **Objective 2.1** Ensure that USDA will have a skilled, satisfied workforce and strong prospects for retention of its best employees.
 - Plan future workforce needs.
 - Coordinate recruitment for under-represented groups and hard-to-fill occupations.
 - Remove barriers to the hiring and retention of employees.
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Strategies to Achieve this Objective - We will

- Establish corporate, Department-wide information systems for human resources functions that provide consistent and timely information to help managers make sound decisions and provide accountability to Congress and taxpayers.
 - Increase the use of student employment programs and internships to recruit and develop a more representative workforce for critical professional and administrative occupations, expand employees' access to quality training and continuing education through technology, build employee commitment to achieving strategic results and make appropriate use of strategic compensation tools and incentives.
Provide safe, modern workplaces and family-friendly policies so employees are more satisfied and productive.
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Key Outcome Measures :

- USDA will have a skilled, satisfied workforce and strong prospects for retention of its best employees.
 - Baseline: In 1999, 68% of USDA employees said that they were satisfied with their work.
Target: By 2005, the percent of USDA employees who say they are satisfied with their work will match or exceed the equivalent percent of private sector employees.
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Key External Factors:

Resources are the major external factor affecting this objective.

Goal 2: Corporate Leadership

- **Objective 2.2** **Provide leadership and coordination to USDA mission areas to improve service delivery through implementation of corporate administrative practices and systems.**
- Implement corporate HR practices and systems.
- Improve USDA employees' ethics awareness and programs.
- Improve USDA's procurement and property processes and systems.
- Improve the management of USDA's central rent accounts.
- Improve the greening of USDA's facilities, fleets and daily operations.
- Improve emergency preparedness posture of USDA.
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Strategies to Achieve this Objective - We will

- Acquire common HR technology and software Department-wide.
 - Use web-based technology for ethics filings.
 - Continue the Purchase Card Management System (PCMS) software refinement process.
 - Fully deploy an Integrated Acquisition System.
 - Develop an intra-agency real property asset management system and system requirements to meet mission goals and objectives.
 - Reconcile system data and develop a systems framework and that will validate real property inventories and provide management and budget information.
 - Establish Uniform procedures for the acquisition and transfer of excess personal property.
 - Develop and implement specific goals for use of renewable energy and alternative fuels by USDA fleets and facilities.
 - Train procurement personnel, credit card holders, realty personnel, facilities managers and fleet managers on government wide greening requirements.
 - Develop, test and evaluate emergency preparedness plans for USDA.
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Key Outcome Measures:

- Improved processing time for personnel activities.
- Baseline will be established in Fiscal Year 2001.
Target: By Fiscal Year 2004, the elapse time to fill vacancies competitively will be reduced to an average of 60 days.
- Implement procurement and property systems.
- Strategy will be established in fiscal year 2001.
Target: All legacy Department-wide procurement automation systems are replaced by 2005. USDA will complete market research on potential new procurement system automation software by the end of fiscal year 2001.
- Implement Procurement and Property Systems.
- Baseline will be established in Fiscal Year 2001.
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Goal 2: Corporate Leadership

Target: All legacy agency and NFC-based procurement systems are replaced by PCMS and IAS - Fiscal Year 2004. USDA will complete new procurement pilot by end of FY-2001.

- Improve accuracy of USDA annual estimates for rent account appropriations.
 - Baseline will be established in Fiscal Year 2001.
Target: Statistical sampling of GSA real property inventory will be completed by 2001.
- Develop USDA Emergency Preparedness plans and improve security briefings.
 - Baseline will be established in Fiscal Year 2001.
Target: By 2002 all Operating Manuals are updated.
- Increase in the use of alternative fuels and renewable energy sources.
 - Baseline: Established in FY 1999, one energy saving performance contract delivery order was issued.
Target: By FY 2002 four contracts will be issued.
- The use of the world wide web for financial disclosure reporting, training and counseling increases.
 - Baseline was established in Fiscal Year 1999 as 90% managers trained in ethics, and 70% disclosures reviewed within 60 days of receipt.
Target: By FY 2002 100% managers trained and 95% of public disclosures reviewed within 60 days.

Key External Factors:

USDA's ability to address its corporate needs will depend on several critical factors: resources, commitment of leadership and the ability of USDA agencies to work toward common goals.

Goal 3 Customer Service

Ensure high quality services so that USDA missions have the space, facilities, mail and property services, personnel support and resources they need to deliver their programs in a timely and efficient manner. Provide quality services to the Office of the Secretary and other full-service customers of DA.

■ **Objective 3.1 Anticipate and deliver timely and efficient services to USDA's national capital region customers.**

- Provide quality mail, copier, excess property management, forms warehouse and central supply services at competitive prices.
 - Assist USDA employees with disabilities in obtaining needed technology.
 - Provide effective LAN and desktop computer support to DA customers.
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Strategies to Achieve this Objective - We will

- Conduct periodic customer surveys to assess customer satisfaction with service in all areas of responsibility.
 - Upgrade technologies used in providing mail and printing services to improve response time, accuracy and reduction of costs.
 - Implement and encourage agencies to use print on demand for forms and publications to reduce storage and costs to agencies.
 - Improve inventory control, distribution and ordering process for forms, supplies and excess property. (Examples- vending machines for supplies will be tested, Internet ordering will be implemented and inventory turnover of items will be monitored to enhance profitability.)
 - Advertise and network with the Office of Civil Rights, Agency Disability Coordinators and others on the services available from the TARGET Center.
 - Reduce downtime of network, improve response time on help desk calls and develop and implement IT security plan.
 - Continually enhance and improve DA Web Page.
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Key Outcome Measures:

- Mail Service:
- Baseline: In 1995 customers service surveys revealed that 60% of mail service customer rating the accuracy of sorting and delivery as good to excellent.

Target: By the end of 2003, 90% of customers rate service as "good to excellent".

Target: New technology for mail room is purchased in FY 2000 and implemented in FY 2001 resulting in improved service. Billings will be 95% accurate and provided to customers within 15 days of the end of the billing period. (Applies to all FY's after implemented).

Goal 3: Customer Service

- Print on Demand:
 - Print on demand equipment purchased, relative cost to customers reduced by 30% by end of FY-2001. Baseline will be determined in FY 2001.
Target: 50% reduction in relative cost by end of FY-2006.

 - Use of BARSCAN and Web Ordering.
 - BARSCAN System and Web Page ordering implemented resulting in 10% increase in profitability (or cost reduction depending on how WCF tracks) and 20% reduction in paperwork processes by end of FY-2001.
Target: 20% increase in profitability and 50% reduction in paper work by end of FY-2006. Turnaround time on orders average not to exceed 3 business days after implementation and 1 business day turnaround by end of FY-2006.

 - TARGET Center Use.
 - Baseline: TARGET Center customer use increased by 20% by end of FY 2001.
Target: 100% increase by end of FY-2006.

 - Decrease in Network downtime.
 - Downtime on DA network reduced to below 5% by end of FY 2001.
Target: 2% downtime by end of FY-2006.
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Key External Factors:

The DA or Working Capital Fund funding/authorization may not be adequate to implement all planned activities. Customers may be reluctant to use new services such as Web Page ordering, or print on demand.

Goal 3: Customer Service

- **Objective 3.2 Provide a safe and functional workplace for USDA employees in the HQ complex and George Washington Carver Center.**
 - Consolidate USDA agencies and effectively use office space through the South Building Renovation Project and overall space management.
 - Operate, maintain, repair and manage the USDA HQ complex and George Washington Carver Center effectively and efficiently.
 - Continue to improve security, environmental, health and safety programs for USDA employees in the Capital Region.
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Strategies to Achieve this Objective - We will

- Continue implementation of the South Building renovation project, providing modern, safer, healthier and more functional work space for USDA employees.
 - Update strategic space plan and continue to develop strategies for better utilization of leased and USDA controlled space to include consolidating agency staff at one location whenever practical.
 - Develop and implement a program to proactively identify and complete telecommunications network repairs in the Headquarters Complex.
 - Continue to identify and implement ways to contain overall operating costs of the USDA controlled facilities.
 - Improve customer satisfaction through timely and effective response to requests for service and complaints.
 - Continue to update and implement plans to enhance security, environmental conditions, safety and health services. Develop and implement computer maintenance control program (i.e. MAXIMO or equivalent) to include service work tracking (help desk), preventative maintenance tracking and major repair projects.
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Key Outcome Measures:

- Reduce number of leased locations and overall square footage leased through completion of the renovation project and better planning and utilization of space.
 - Baseline: 1.125 million useable square feet of leased office space was established in 1997.
Target: Consolidation of agencies, reduction of leased sites, and the completion of the South Building Renovation Project by 2010.
 - Continue maintenance investment projects in public areas of the Headquarters complex.
 - Baseline: Preventive maintenance hours of labor in 1999 were 20, 210.
Target: 19,000 hours of labor by FY 2002.
 - Decrease energy consumption in the South Building
 - Baseline will be developed in FY 2001.
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Goal 3: Customer Service

Target: By 2006 maintain costs below GSA comparable cost.

Key External Factors:

Lack of funding or reduction in funding request would delay and increase cost of renovation project. USDA Agencies who have excess space may not be receptive to reductions in space or consolidations. Non USDA organizations may create challenges to overall space planning.

Goal 3: Customer Service

■ Objective 3.3 Improve Human Resources Customer Services to DA's 1,700 full-service customers.

- Establish processing standards for key human resources service areas.
 - Streamline the hiring process.
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Strategies to Achieve this Objective - We will

- Work with our customers to identify priorities.
 - Implement standard processes throughout customer base.
 - Track progress towards meeting standard processing times.
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Key Outcome Measures:

- Customers of HR services are satisfied with services provided.
 - Baseline: In FY 1999, satisfaction rate was 33.6%,
Target: By end of FY 2002, 75% satisfaction rate will be achieved.
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Key External Factors:

Customer expectations are an important factor. The full-service customer base includes the Secretary and, with a few exceptions, the offices that report directly to the Secretary/Deputy Secretary, all the top Departmental policy offices. Lack of funding for technology and support systems has been a long-standing problem. Change in top USDA leadership also will affect DA's ability to meet customer demands, in that priorities may change.

Linkage of Goals to Annual Performance Plan

The DA Annual Performance Plan is directly linked to the Objectives in the DA Strategic Plan. Performance measures identified in the strategic plan will also be used in the DA Annual Performance Plan. The objectives support the accomplishments of all goals listed in the DA Strategic Plan.

Resources Needed

DA will continue to strive to maximize results based on available resources. However, funding for operational improvements, especially for processes to the full-service customers (Office of the Secretary and Staff, Departmental Offices and Departmental Administration) has not been sufficient to meet expectations for improved services, especially for implementing new systems and technologies to automate day-to-day work. Lack of resources may prevent DA from conducting program evaluations to the level needed, and in investing in training and operational improvements, especially in the human resources services.

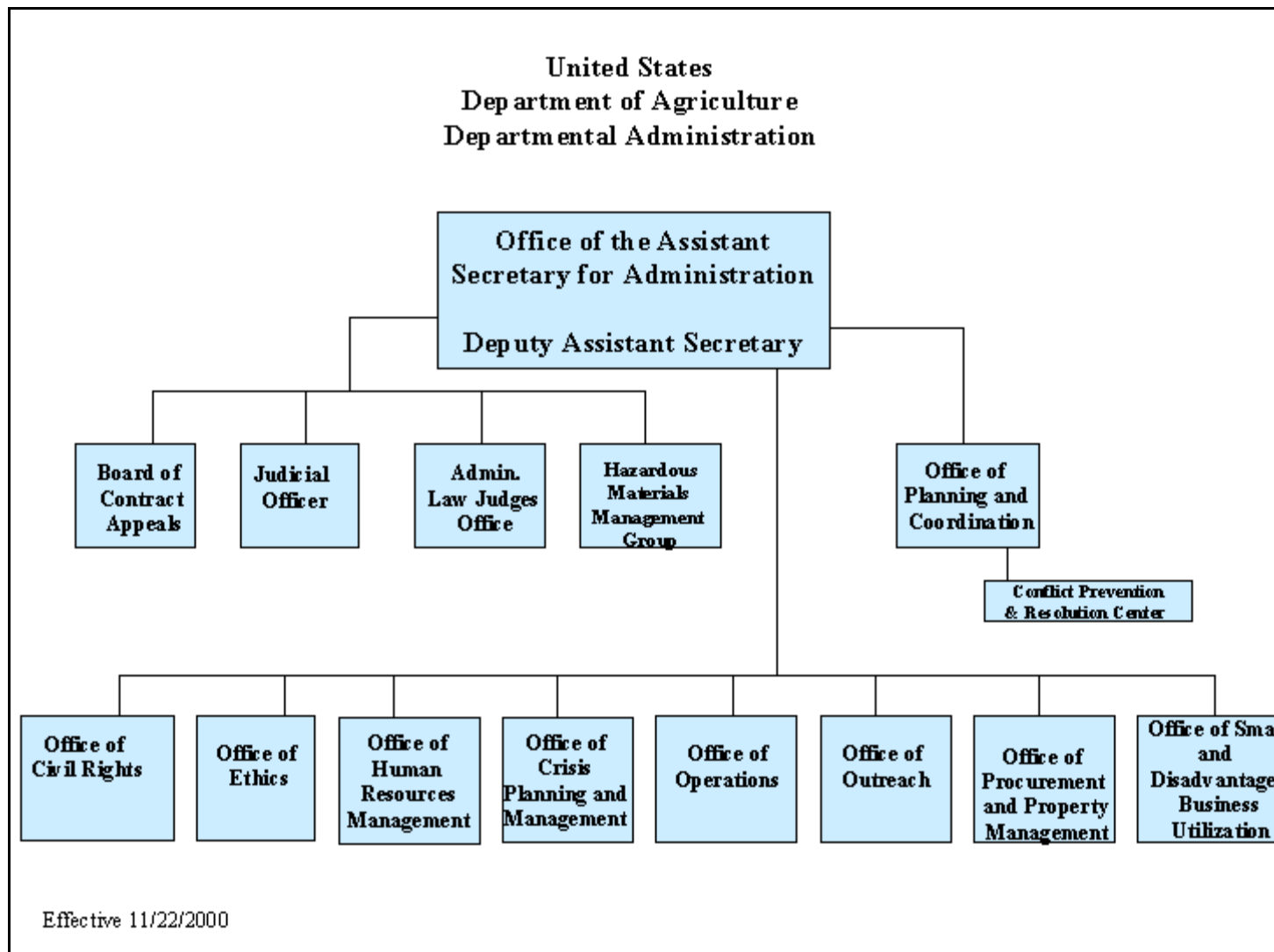
Program Evaluation

DA is in the process of or has developed baselines for each of the performance measures. These baselines, combined with an analysis of the gaps between baselines and goals, provide a realistic and accurate assessment of Departmental Administration. DA also conducts evaluations of agency programs to determine whether policy and procedures are applied legally and in a manner that support accomplishment of USDA program missions. However, current USDA information systems are not capable of producing data that can be readily used in assessing the performance of administrative programs.

Role of External Entities

No non-Federal entities were used in the preparation of this Plan.

Departmental Administration Organizations



DA Organizations

The **Office of Human Resources** works directly with the Secretary and top USDA officials on all personnel management concerns. In addition to the full range of policy support in the area of personnel management, DA also serves as the personnel office for the Secretary and staff, and the Departmental Offices reporting directly to the Secretary.

The **Office of Procurement and Property Management** serves the Secretary and the USDA agencies with policy, advice and coordination in acquisitions, procurement and management of real and personal property. In addition, they provide oversight and policy in transportation, supply motor vehicles aircraft, recycling, and energy conservation. In partnership with other USDA agencies and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, the Office of Procurement and Property Management provides leadership in the development and deployment of modern USDA procurement systems. The responsibilities in improving nationwide space management, including supporting collocation of USDA agency field offices, serve to achieve both customer service and administrative efficiencies.

The **Office of Operations** is responsible for providing cost-efficient, centralized services including: health units, interpreting services, mail, copier, duplicating, departmental mailing lists, supplies and personal property, forms and publication distribution, information technology and services/supply contracting for the Office of the Secretary, staff offices, and other USDA agencies, upon request. One of the Office of Operation's major responsibilities is to manage the Strategic Space Plan. USDA headquarters is presently housed in the four-building government-owned Agriculture Complex on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. and in leased offices in metropolitan DC. Under the Washington Area Strategic Space Plan USDA will optimize its use of facilities. Major initiatives under this plan are the construction of the Beltsville Maryland Office Complex and the Ten-Year (South Building) Renovation Plan which affects 5,000 employees.

Office of Ethics. Established in 1998, this Office seeks to foster an environment in which USDA decision making is, and is publicly perceived to be, untainted by any conflicting personal interest of its staff. The Office of Ethics provides responsive counseling and advice to all employees; administers personal financial disclosure requirements on covered staff; and provides training to USDA staff on various rules governing employee conduct, conflicts of interest, and political activity. The Ethics Program is mandated by the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 as amended.

Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business (OSDBU), established June 26, 1979, serves as USDA's lead agency in providing an integrated focus for the implementation and execution of programs to assist small, small disadvantaged and women-owned businesses in supporting USDA's missions. OSDBU develops policies, standards, and programs consistent with federal guidelines for developing, managing, analyzing, evaluating, and improving Departmental, agency, and staff office Affirmative Procurement Programs. OSDBU provides guidance to assist agencies and staff offices in the development and implementation of activities that ensure outreach efforts involve all targeted groups and that the participation of small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned

businesses in the Department's contracting and program activities are increased. Additionally, OSDBU develops and coordinates programs designed to expand the number of USDA business opportunities available to small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses and identify and eliminate barriers that prevent or severely restrict small business access to USDA programs or small business participation in providing goods and services to the Department. Through partnerships with USDA program offices, professional associations, and universities, OSDBU promotes the growth and competitiveness of small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses located in rural America.

Office of Outreach. The Office of Outreach provides overall leadership and coordination to assure that all potential customers have full access to all USDA programs and services. In conjunction with other USDA agencies, special emphasis is directed toward under-served populations. Established on August 22, 1997 by Secretary's Memorandum No. 1020-48, the office includes the resources of the Outreach for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Program, authorized by Section 2501 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990.

Office of Planning and Coordination. The Office of Planning and Coordination assists the Assistant Secretary for Administration and other policy officials of the Department in the development and execution of administrative policies that cut across mission and functional lines. The Office provides planning, analysis, coordination and special initiative support for functions assigned to Departmental Administration.

Office of Crisis Planning and Management. The Office of Crisis Planning and Management provides Departmental leadership, policy guidance, emergency planning and consequence management for both terrorist activities and natural disasters.

Board of Contract Appeals (BCA). The BCA is an independent, impartial adjudicatory body created within the Department pursuant to the Contract Disputes Act of 1978, 41 U.S.C. 601-613, to act as an appellate body, reviewing contracting officers' final decisions on Government contract matters. This Board is authorized to grant the same relief in contract matters as the United States Court of Federal Claims. Board decisions are published and establish case precedents in the field of Government contracts.

Office of the Administrative Law Judges (OALJ). This Office conducts rule-making and adjudicatory hearings throughout the United States in proceedings subject to the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), 5 U.S.C. 554 *et seq.* The Judges issue initial decisions and orders in adjudicatory proceedings which become final decisions of the Secretary unless appealed to the Secretary's Judicial Officer by a party to the proceedings.

Judicial Officer (JO). The JO serves as the final deciding officer, in place of the Secretary, in regulatory proceedings of a quasi-judicial nature.

Hazardous Materials Management Group. The Hazardous Materials Management Group (Group) was established to implement a USDA hazardous materials management and pollution prevention program using the funds provided in the USDA Appropriations specifically for this purpose. The Group reports directly to the USDA Hazardous Materials Policy Council (Council) and implements programs under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation,

and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund), the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), the Pollution Prevention Act (PPA), and the Oil Pollution Act (OPA). The Group is assigned to DA for administrative purposes only and receives its direction from the Council.